



Board of Commissioners

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MEETING MINUTES

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Goal Setting Work Session

May 9, 2023 – 9:00 AM

Present: Pat Malone, Chair; Xanthippe Augerot, Vice Chair; Nancy Wyse, Commissioner; Suzanne Hoffman, Interim County Administrator; Maura Kwiatkowski, Recorder; Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer; Tracy Martineau, Human Resources Director; Nick Kurth, Justice System Improvement Program Manager; Tammy Webb, Human Resources Analyst; April Holland, Interim Health Director; Amanda Makepeace, Administrative Specialist; Rick Crager, Chief Financial Officer; Matt Wetherell, Juvenile Director; Darren Nichols, Community Development Director

Guests: Derek Smith, Gallagher & Co.; Alex Powers, Mid-Valley Media Group

1. Opening

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Malone called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

1.2 Introductions

Introductions were made.

1.3 Announcements

There were no announcements.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Discussion Topics

3.1 Strategic Communications Update – Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer

Grogan introduced Nick Kurth, Justice System Improvement Program (JSIP) Manager, and Kailee Olson, Health Department Communications Coordinator, both of whom provide updates regarding their specific areas.

Kurth reported that 9,886 ballots (of a potential 60,296) had been received for the May 16 Special Election as of May 8. In November 2015, which was the ballot on which the last JSIP bond measure appeared, 22,135 ballots were cast. Kurth indicated the Communications team was finalizing statements for elected officials (covering all potential outcomes), and Grogan will provide them to the media at the appropriate time. Outcomes include pass, fail, or uncertain. The statute change providing for ballots to be counted if they are postmarked by Election Day and received within seven days could cause a delay in results. Since this is a Benton County election, PIO Grogan will lead communications on Election Day. Kurth also advised that Brenda Downum's contract had been extended until the end of the year, but the amount was not increased. Kurth asked Downum to prepare a postmortem communications report similar to a report done in the past by others. Kurth will ask Downum to provide an outline of the report to the Commissioners.

Olson reported that the Health Department, Sheriff's Office, Corvallis Police Department, and the Board of Commissioners Office are partnering to promote community awareness around fentanyl. The purpose is to educate the community about danger and safety relative to this synthetic opioid. Outreach communications will include myth busting, opportunities and resources for treatment, and other tools regarding harm reduction and reducing overdose danger. It will be a rehabilitative versus punitive approach. A press release will be issued today, and the Health Department website has been updated with a banner link to more information and resources. The Sheriff's Office plans to issue a press release later this month. In addition, the Health Department and Sheriff's Office are conducting a fentanyl information and awareness event on May 23 at 6:30 PM at the Kalapuya Building. Reader boards are positioned throughout the community to publicize the event. Spanish content is also being created to coordinate an awareness event for Spanish speakers. Augerot is glad to see these important educational events happening.

Grogan reported to the Board on the new public podcasts; he has received positive feedback on Episode 1, and Episode 2 (featuring the Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk) will air soon. Episode 3 will focus on the Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center.

A webpage was created for the Historic Courthouse Advisory Committee to raise community awareness of the Committee's activities. Downum may be able to help with additional outreach efforts regarding the Historic Courthouse and the Committee's work.

In June, more outreach will be conducted on grants programming, which will include highlighting the success of the local ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grants program.

Additional Communications team activities include plans to highlight the latest Fleet award, supporting Health on Mental Health Awareness Week outreach, support for In the Know About H2O, and support for Public Works on the West Hills Survey.

Grogan also noted the recent open house/Corvallis School District pARTy, which may become an annual event. Malone noted it was an enjoyable celebration that helped educate the public about the departments and services located in the Kalapuya Building.

Grogan advised that weekly media reports will be distributed and socialized more with department directors, especially when media relates to or features their departments.

Malone thanked Grogan for all his efforts. Grogan recognized JonnaVe Stokes and Melanie McNaughton, members of the PIO Communications Team, as well as the Health Department and Sheriff's Office Communications Teams. Grogan would like to be able to provide social media analytics and reports, bandwidth permitting. Hoffman indicated the Joint Information Center did a great deal of analytics during the COVID pandemic. Grogan indicated there may be an opportunity to present some recent analytics at the June Goal Setting meeting. Grogan pointed out that what is observed on social media may be different than what is seen in traditional media.

At the upcoming Benton Breakfast, Commissioners will present the Public Service Awards. Grogan encouraged Commissioners to submit their award selections to Deputy Financial Services Director Debbie Sessions as soon as possible. Sessions will provide the Commissioners with talking points for the selected winners.

Grogan reported the Community Outreach Plan was distributed for comment and some feedback was received. The Plan is now ready for presentation to the Leadership Team. The next component will be media relations; updating our processes and how we communicate with media. Grogan is also updating the media policy and strategic and internal communications. Strategic communications plans will guide the media relations plan.

Grogan advised of several upcoming events: Philomath Frolic, Benton County Fair, and Fall Festival. Staff is also considering an event for Monroe. Augerot mentioned Juneteenth and that the Health Department is involved. Health offices are proximate to the Community Center where Juneteenth activities are being held. Olson said fentanyl awareness and mental health promotion may be table topics for the Juneteenth event.

Grogan indicated a biennium report is being developed. Augerot noted the variety of ways the report can be produced and distributed. Grogan will be reaching out to the various departments about how to present the information.

Two Communications staff recently attend GSMCON (the Government Social Media Conference). Issues discussed included the First Amendment and what can/cannot be said on social media (profanity versus obscenity, etc.). Olson reported two Health staff attended GSMCON virtually – Javier Navarro and Rocio Munoz.

Grogan noted that photos, information, and videos from people in the field garner more interest/attention on social media. He would like to conduct training with employees in the field about taking quality photos and writing effective captions for social media postings.

3.2 Proclamations Process – *Cory Grogan, Public Information Officer*

Grogan reminded that the Proclamation Calendar is in place but needs to remain flexible – the County should be able to highlight at least one proclamation per month. The concern has been too many proclamations, which can dilute their value. The solution is to put some proclamations on the Consent Calendar; Commissioners support this approach. Proclamations being read, especially if we are doing outreach on the issue, need a department or community expert who can read them at a Board meeting. Grogan suggested that if no one is available, a commissioner could read the proclamation.

Wyse noted that in other jurisdictions, if there is an event, a governing body's mayor or chair will be asked to read a proclamation at the event. The proclamation is then included on the Consent Calendar of the next meeting; this is something the Board could consider. Grogan noted the County is now posting signed proclamations on the website.

Malone indicated he is pleased with this approach to proclamations. Malone also believes the PIO reports may require additional time on Goal Setting Meeting agendas.

3.3 *County Compensation Philosophy – *Tracy Martineau, Human Resources; Derek Smith, Gallagher and Company*

Martineau introduced compensation consultant Derek Smith of Gallagher and Co., who is conducting a compensation study for Benton County. Smith highlighted the three approaches to compensation philosophy: lagging, leading, or meeting the market. Smith's presentation [Exhibit 1] posed several questions:

Question 1: How does Benton County differentiate itself in the market?

Smith noted Benton County's market differentiators include the presence of a university, a Best Place to Live ranking, unaffordability, and a progressive Board of Commissioners that funds programming, medium size (small enough to be nimble but large enough to have resources to make progress).

Question 2: What does not work well within the current compensation program?

Wyse pointed to a specific issue at the Sheriff's Office: lower ranking officers may be earning more than higher ranking officers (compression). A long-term solution is needed for this situation. Augerot noted that sometimes minimum qualifications can work against the County's process; applicants may have more experiential learning than formal learning. Malone cited the recent state law on pay equity.

Augerot asked several questions: What is our market? To whom are we comparing ourselves? Augerot also pointed out that choices other counties make may affect the comparators.

Question 3: What works well with the current compensation program?

Malone indicated the Commissioners do not deal with these issues regularly but believes the benefit package is toward the upper end of the market (anecdotal knowledge). Wyse agreed. Wyse also cited the teleworking policy. Augerot indicated the County previously

struggled with a performance-based pay system due to a lack of employee trust and no goal setting system.

Question 4: Why does Benton County need a compensation philosophy?

Wyse said it provides a basis for decision making. Augerot suggested the need to attract the best talent from a diverse talent pool. Malone agreed with these points and expressed the need for a roadmap for the future. Augerot indicated the County must embed equity in the compensation philosophy.

Question 5: What type of tool can the compensation philosophy be used for?

Augerot suggested recruitment advertising and communications. People attracted to these types of jobs want to see statements of values, ethics, and goals. Malone included employee retention.

Question 6: How does compensation philosophy define the organization?

Wyse indicated the philosophy reflects values and culture. Malone believes it demonstrates the County cares about employees.

Question 7: What are the must haves for the compensation program?

Wyse cited the importance of clarifying expectations for individuals. Augerot noted transparency of compensation ranges and expectations for advancing in the range, employer provided training and opportunities for advancement, and clarification of benefits as a component of total compensation.

Smith shared several trends in compensation philosophy statements:

Fair Administration. Need to be specific/intentional about placing this in communications so employees see that policies are fairly and consistently applied.

Internal Equitable Practices. The staff job evaluation system is based on a market driven approach that consists of pay ranges (minimum, midpoint, maximum) closely reflecting the marketplace for pay.

External Competitiveness. Is compensation based more on responsibilities or the geographic market? Performance based pay has been a struggle to implement and maintain in the public sector, in part due to difficulty in assigning metrics. This makes performance more difficult to measure than in the manufacturing industry, for example. Performance based factors include years of service, position level, related job experience outside the organization, and an annual salary increase pool.

Human Resources will be drafting a compensation statement, which is usually about four sentences long. Smith will send his notes from this meeting to Martineau and Webb to help support the process of drafting a compensation philosophy statement.

Wyse expressed appreciation to Smith for the structured, policy level presentation.

Augerot indicated feeling conflicted about leading versus matching the market. Ideally, the County would lead the market, but it cannot afford to do so top to bottom in the organization. It is also important to grow our own talent and teach people to become

leaders. Augerot wants to reward innovators and attract a diverse pool of candidates. Martineau pointed out the market changes based on the position. Management/confidential roles require more significant preparation and are typically at higher compensation levels, and candidates for these roles are more likely to consider relocation. Compensation comparators are from the western United States market. Health staff are hiring quickly, and the County needs to pay close attention to salary surveys for that sector. Upon conclusion of the compensation survey, Martineau and Smith will return to the Board with a matching or leading the market presentation and what the County can afford. Chief Financial Officer Rick Crager will provide information regarding affordability later in the process.

The compensation study is currently in the data collection phase, and benchmark jobs have been identified. Once data is collected, analysis will begin. Wyse indicated it would be helpful for future conversations to provide examples as to which positions the data would apply. Wyse would also like to see mentorship of employees who have the desire and ability to grow, and she would like to have a conversation around value.

Malone pointed to the need to assure current and potential employees that Benton County is a good place to work.

Wyse asked whether Human Resources follows up with candidates who decline County job offers, and Martineau indicated yes. Wyse asked what is done with that information. If compensation is the issue, Webb will conduct a compensation review. The County has found itself in bidding wars with other employers. Other factors can also contribute to a candidate declining a Benton County job offer.

Augerot was pleased to see different strategies for various levels and distinct types of roles. It is a balancing act, but she does not want to lag the market. Augerot asked how long the study will take and the desired timing for implementation. Martineau plans to bring an interim adjustment to the Board in the next few weeks. The compensation survey should be complete in mid-July.

[Exhibit 1: Benton County 2023 Compensation Philosophy Discussion Presentation]

3.4 County Administrator Recruitment Update – *Tracy Martineau, Human Resources*

Martineau reported nine applications have been received thus far, and the recruiter is talking with several other potential candidates. The end of next week will be the time to decide whether to extend the first application review date or keep May 22 as planned. The recruiter expects a flurry of interest in the next week or so.

3.5 Health Director/Health Administrator Position – *Suzanne Hoffman, Interim County Administrator*

Hoffman directed the Board's attention to the memorandum in the meeting packet and reminded the Commissioners of the background. Hoffman, Martineau, and Crager

discussed how best to move forward and believe waiting another six months may not be the best approach. Hoffman believes now may be the time to recruit – not to wait too much longer – regardless of which direction the Board chooses. The new County Administrator (CA) may not have health experience; however, this role is a direct report to the CA, and there is value in having the new CA included in the final selection.

Hoffman recommends having one department versus the two-department (Health and Behavioral Health) model the County has been using. Also, a name change for the department may be appropriate since there is a need to recognize the identities of the separate divisional areas. Meetings with other counties will help inform any change management. Hoffman suggested Health and Human Services Department for the new title, as this is common nomenclature. This name, however, does not propose the County take on additional work or service provision. Developmental Disability and homelessness work are components of the Human Services term. Augerot noted the possible assumption of veterans' services from Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments due to a lack of staffing within that organization.

Wyse acknowledged Hoffman's excellent leadership of the Health Department.

Augerot believes recruiting difficulty resulted from a lack of clarity and supports a single leadership role. Wyse also supported the change and was pleased to see there would be a change management plan. Wyse believes the County should move ahead. Malone also expressed interest in moving ahead now.

MOTION: Wyse moved to accept the staff recommendation to 1) replace the Health Department Director position with one that will oversee all the County's health divisions; 2) rename the department "Health and Human Services Department," which honors all aspects of the policy work and service provision performed; 3) convert the Community Health Centers from a department to a division that will join the existing Health Department divisions as direct reports to a new Health and Human Services Department Director; and 4) proceed with recruitment. Augerot seconded the motion, which was approved 3-0.

Martineau pointed out the benefit of having the new CA choose this team member. Malone appreciated that benefit but believed the County should move ahead. Wyse noted the new CA may be in place before the final hiring decision is made. Hoffman will continue to update the Board as the recruitment progresses.

3.6 County Administrator Updates – *Suzanne Hoffman, Interim County Administrator*

There were no County Administrator updates.

3.7 Commissioner Updates – *Board of Commissioners*

Malone provided updates:

- Participated in the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) Natural Resources Committee meeting on May 5.
- Oregon State University (OSU) Extension, as well as two other extension services, have requested a supplemental budget of \$50M to maintain current services levels. This level of additional funding is not promising and could affect some local extension services.
- Senate Bill 80 is wildfire legislation providing that wildfire hazard maps – rather than wildfire risk maps – will be published. Modest funding would be available for fire wise community efforts around the state.
- Attended the May 5 AOC Transportation and Community Development Committee meeting. The topic of abandoned recreational vehicles was discussed, as it is a growing problem in some communities. Suggestions for addressing this issue included assessing a fee at the time of purchase to fund disposal efforts. Wyse reported that most abandonments in Benton County are occurring on Forest Lands.
- The Governor postponed until 2026 the tolling conversation for Interstate 5 and Oregon Route 205. Malone will clarify whether this postponement affects the proposal for the new Columbia River bridge.
- The federal gas tax has not increased since 1993. Insufficient revenue is being generated to perform road maintenance or fund other infrastructure projects.

Augerot provided updates:

- Traveled to Salem on May 5 to provide testimony before the Joint Ways and Means Construction Subcommittee regarding Benton County's Emergency Operations Center and homelessness navigation center funding; will share a copy of testimony with the other Commissioners. Augerot noted excellent County staff support, as well as support from CFM Advocates.
- Participated in various AOC activities on May 8, although several steering committees did not meet. Activity at the State Legislature has slowed due to the Senate walkout and the requirement that all bills have plain language. Some bills were returned to their drafters for rewrites to comply with the plain language requirements. AOC-preferred bills appear to be generally moving forward, and AOC and legislator relations are currently positive.
- Will be presenting at the Natural Resources State Leadership Meeting on May 11 following the Benton Breakfast.
- The Mosman Order and Aid and Assist Issue: Marion and Washington Counties have been granted amici status in the lawsuit and are asking other counties and the AOC to support their efforts. Marion County has issued two communications on this topic. Augerot would like the Benton County Board of Commissioners to discuss this item and make a formal decision. County Counsel should also be involved in the process.
- Attended fundraisers for Jackson Street Youth Services and the Boys & Girls Club of Corvallis.

- Plans to attend the National Association of Counties Annual Conference in Austin July 21 through 24.
- The AOC Legislative Committee Retreat will be held September 23 in Klamath Falls.

Wyse provided updates:

- In Utah May 17 through 19 for the National Association of Counties Western Regional Conference.
- Recently chaired the Local Officials Advisory Committee, which now has a full membership. The Committee's next meeting is in July.

4. Other

ORS 192.640(1)" . . . notice shall include a list of the principal subjects anticipated to be considered at the meeting, but this requirement shall not limit the ability of a governing body to consider additional subjects."

There was no other business.

Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 11:49 AM.



Pat Malone, Chair



Maura Kwiatkowski, Recorder

* NOTE: Items denoted with an asterisk do NOT have accompanying written materials in the meeting packet.